

ANCIENT LATIN INSCRIPTION,

NOT IMPROBABLY A CHRISTIAN EPITAPH,

FOUND IN NORTHUMBERLAND, ENGLAND.

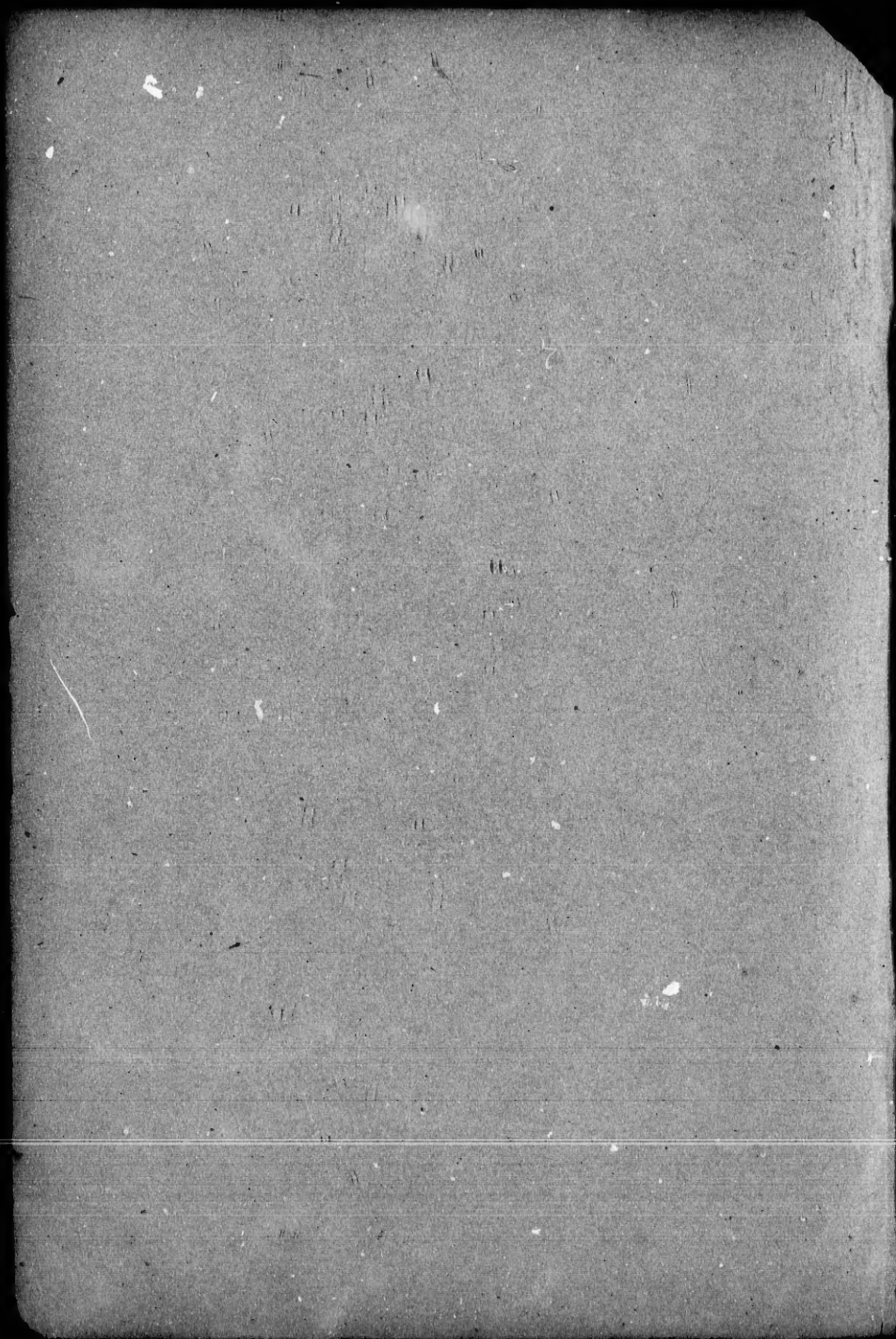
BY THE REV. JOHN MCCAUL, LL.D.,

President of University College, Toronto.

TORONTO:

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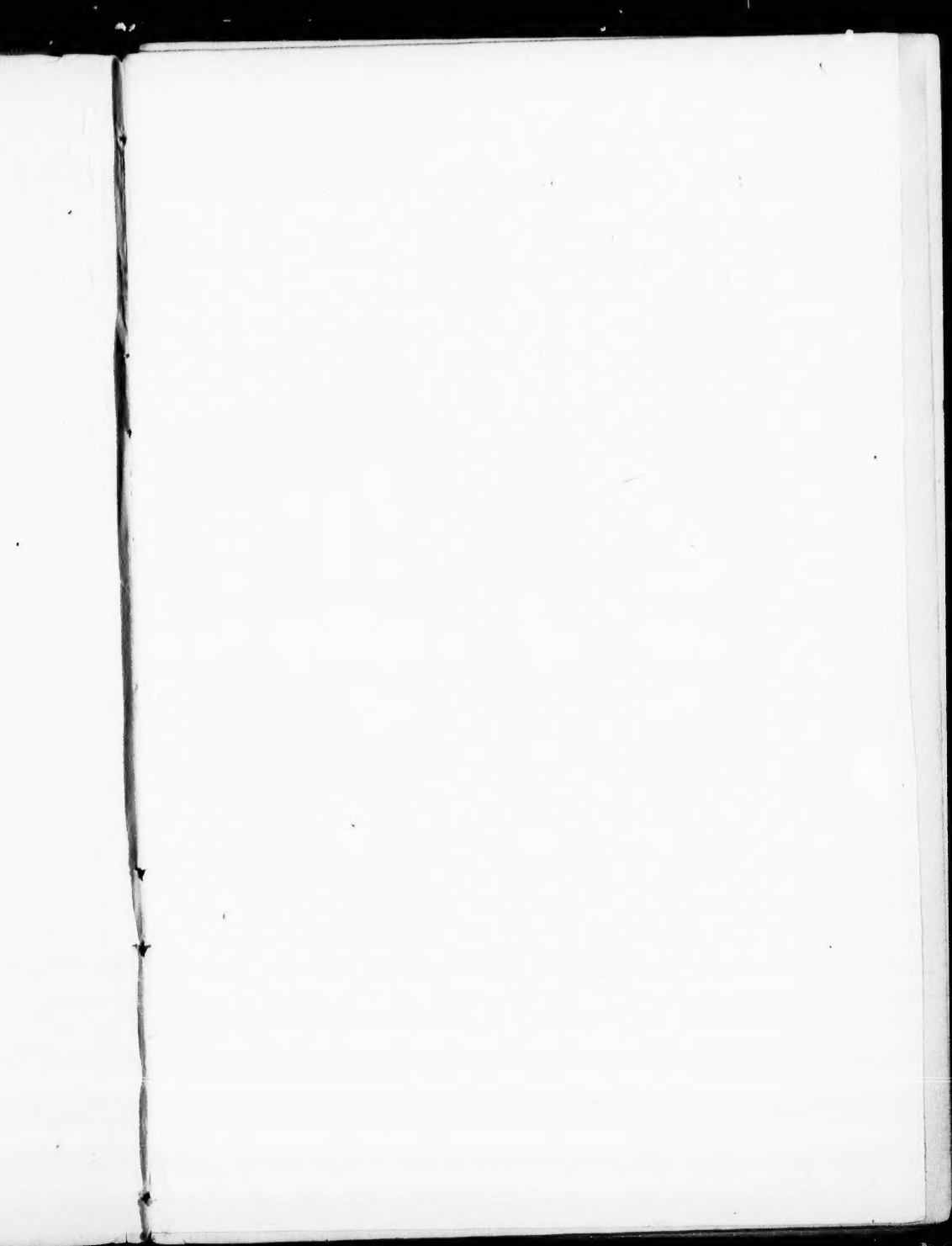
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ANCIENT LATIN INSCRIPTION,

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At Risingham, in Northumberland, are the remains of a station that during a portion of the Roman occupation of the island must have been of considerable importance. It lies close to the Watling Street, between High Rochester (*Bremenium*) and Colchester (*Corstopitum*), at the distance of about 8 miles from the former and 15 from the latter. In the Itinerary of Antoninus, for "some reason as yet undiscovered, it is omitted; and its ancient name is unknown. Camden, on the authority of an inscription found there, as read by him, supposed that it had been called *Habitancum*, and this supposition has been so fully adopted by British Archaeologists, that in the maps and descriptions of Horsley, Bruce, MacLauchlan, and others (including the Editor of the *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, Mr. W. Hughes in his map of *Britannia Romana*, and Mr. George Long in his *Classical Atlas*), this name is introduced as certain. In Bri-

* Mr. W. Thompson Watkin, in an article "on the 10th Iter of the British portion of the Itinerary of Antoninus." *Journal of Archæol. Institute*, 1871, p. 110, suggests that "possibly it was built soon after the Itinerary was compiled," (*i. e.* according to his views—between A.D. 138, the year in which Hadrian died, and A.D. 144, the year in which Antoninus Pius completed his third consulship) "destroyed in the insurrection in the reign of Commodus, and rebuilt by Severus." In the map illustrating the article, he gives *Eburocassum*, with a query, as the name of the station. See p. 125 of the *Journal*. Ebechester seems to have an etymological (if no better) claim to the ancient designation—*Eburocassum*=*Eburocastrum*.

† The altar bearing this inscription was (and, I believe, is) in the vestibule of the library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

tanno-Roman Inscriptions, p. 146, I drew attention to the total absence of ancient authority for the designation *Habitancum*, and ventured to impugn Camden's interpretation of the inscription, in which he found HABITANCI. Subsequently, having ascertained from an improved wood-cut in the 3rd edition of Dr. Bruce's Roman Wall, that the true reading was HABITANCCIPRIMASTAT, I returned to the subject (in the "Canadian Journal" for April, 1869), and suggested what I believe to be the true reading and expansion—*habita nomine ducenarii (or cubicularii) prima statione*.

From this station numerous relics of the Roman period, including many inscribed stones, have been obtained. A considerable number of them are in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, presented chiefly by Messrs. Richard and William Shanks. In addition to these, there is in the same collection a portion of an inscribed stone also found there, which is thus described in the *Archæologia Æliana*, New Series, Vol. i., p. 244.

"Part of an altar, which has been split down the middle to form a gate-post. From HABITANCUM; presented by Mr. James Forster. Hodgson, who describes the altar (Hist. Nor. pt. ii., vol. 1, p. 186), suspects the inscription was in hexameter verse. Mr. Hodgson's copy of the inscription is here placed side by side with the engraving; a comparison of the two will enable the reader to ascertain on which of the letters he may rely."

When I first saw this notice in the *Archæologia Æliana*, with the accompanying wood-cut, I at once recognized the justice of Mr. Hodgson's suspicion that "the inscription was in hexameter verse," and I attempted to read it as a poetical dedication to some deity or deities. In this attempt, both as regards the names of the deities and the appropriateness of the language, especially as compared with other inscriptions in verse, I was so unsuccessful that I almost abandoned the expectation of extracting from the fragments any feasible sense. On receiving, however, from Dr. Bruce, a copy of a very superior †wood-cut, by Utting, of Mr. Mossman's drawing of the object, my attention, whilst I was examining it, was arrested by the letters EPOIIMR in the second line and PAC in the eighth. From these, regarding EPO as part of DEPO = *Depositus*, MR as a

† From the readings of this wood-cut the names of certain deities may be conjectured, but the language and tone of the verses—so far as such may be collected from the fragments—are unlike any votive specimen in Latin epigraphy that I remember having seen, nor can I devise an explanatory theory on the supposition that the inscription is Pagan.

misreading of MAR = some case of *Martius*, the name of the month, and PAC part of some case of *pax*, I formed the conjecture that the inscription was a †Christian epitaph, not improbably, as I further ventured to infer from the remains of §*pro funere lucem voluit reddere vite* in the 12th, 13th and 14th lines, of one whose life had been taken by violence, and, possibly, on account of his profession of Christianity. This conjecture was countenanced by the apparent imitation in the 9th and 10th lines of a well-known passage in the *Æneid*—

*At tibi pro scelere, exclamat, pro talibus ausis,
Di, si qua est celo pietas, quæ talia curet,
Persolvant grates dignas, et præmia reddant—*

a poem, which has been also drawn on by several ancient writers of epitaphs, *e. gr.*, in the celebrated verses on *Papas Antimio*, in De Rossi's *Inscript. Christianæ*, n. 403. See my remarks in "Christian Epitaphs of the first six centuries," p. 27.

Possessed, as I now am, of four copies of the inscription—*a woodcut of Mr. Mossman's drawing, and a photograph (for both of which I am indebted to Dr. Bruce), in addition to the two given in the *Archæologia Eliana*—I propose examining each line, with a view to the development of all that can be read or reasonably inferred. In this examination I dare not hope to attain to more than some degree of probability; the *data* are not sufficient to warrant any expectation of certainty.

The first step is, of course, to determine the text as accurately as we can. With this view, I subjoin the 14 lines as they appear in the four copies, premising that in photographs of worn inscriptions we often find illusory semblances of letters, and consequently such readings should be received with great caution.

† The use of *deposuit* with the day of the month, and *in pace* either immediately after *deposuit* or in some other part of the inscription, is characteristic of early Christian epitaphs. See "Christian Epitaphs of the First Six Centuries."

§ A doubt suggested itself to me whether this form of expression might not have been used to denote the erection of a monument or statue, as in Cicero, *Philipp.* ix—*Reddita est ei tum a majoribus statua pro vita*, and *Reddite igitur, patres conscripti, ei vitam, cui ademistis; vita enim mortuorum in memoria est posita vivorum*. The objections, however, to this view, arising from the character of the object, and from the phraseology of the inscription, seemed so strong that I soon rejected it.

* Through Dr. Bruce's kindness, I am able to present the reader with a copy of this excellent illustration.

	I.	I.	† III.	V.
(1)	INH	IN	INII?CNG	RKES??SAC
(2)	E IMR	ED	EPOHIMR	EPO??MAR
(3)	IPERGEI	RGEL	EMPERGEL	EMPERGEL
(4)	FERVINI	VINE	PERVINI	RV NI
(5)	I IN		VRVERINI	
(6)	D		FIS VS	
(7)	EFICENE	FICIN	EFICENE	PICTITINIE
(8)	AVEFPAC	EFPAG	AVEFPAC	?VEFPAC??
(9)	IIBIPRO	IBIPRO	TIBIPRO	?TIBIPRO
(10)	IGEPR	LVCEPRO	NCEPRO	?VCEPR??
(11)	EMINIVS	FLAMINIVS	LMINIVSV	?LAMINIVS?
(12)	EPROFVNP	ETPROFVNE	IEPROFVNE	EPROFVNE
(13)	VGEMVOEV	CEMVOLV	VCCEMVOLV	VCCEMVOLV
(14)	DEREVITAE	DEREVITAE	DEREVITAE	DEREVITAE

I. According to wood-cut in *Archæol. Eliana*. II. According to Mr. Hodgson's examination of the stone. III. According to Mr. Mossman's drawing. IV. According to photograph. On comparison of the first three readings with the photograph, the following are the results at which I have arrived.

In the 1st line, the only letters (and those shadowy) that I can discover in the photograph are RKS or RKES and SAC: the intermediate are illegible.

In the 2nd line, EP preceded by the semicircular part of D are certain, O after P probable, and MAR almost certain, but the characters between O and M are illegible.

In the 3rd line, EMPERGEL are certain.

In the 4th line, RV N and I are certain, but the rest illegible.

In the 5th line, the only characters that I can discover look like ESTE.

In the 6th line, no letter is legible but S, followed by one or two other letters at the end.

In the 7th line, the first two characters are very indistinct. Of these the second resembles E or F. After these, FICT or PICT are clear, then a ligatured character, representing TINI tied, the same apparently as that which appears in an inscription, of the date A.D. 205-208, that was found here. See Dr. Bruce's Roman Wall, 3rd edn., p. 336, and Britanno-Roman Inscriptions, p. 149. There is this difference, however, that the prolongation of the first upright of the N in this inscription resembles a cross (or an I on TI) rather than

† As some of the characters and fragments of letters in this reading cannot be represented by ordinary types, the reader is referred to the wood-cut prefixed to this article.

merely TI. After this composite character there is E, or there are two letters that look like IE.

In the 8th line, the first two letters are uncertain, especially the first. The second may be N or A and V tied. The third is certainly E, the fourth F or P followed by PA certainly, after which come C or G and possibly E.

In the 9th line, the first letter is illegible, but an oblique stroke looks like the relic of a V, whence *heu* may be conjectured. TIBIPRO seem to be certain, but the letter after O is very indistinct. It may have been M.

In the 10th line, the first letter is very indistinct. It was possibly I or L. The second letter may have been N or V, the third certainly C followed after a longer space than usual by EPR, after which two letters are lost.

In the 11th line, the letters are almost certainly LAMINIVSV. Of these, A and the last V are not as clear as the others, but of the two a small A is distinct in the photograph. Before L seem to be the remains of the bars of F.

In the 12th line, the letters are certainly EPROFVNE.

In the 13th line, the letters are certainly VCEMVOLV.

In the 14th line, the letters are certainly DEREVITAE.

As we have now considered the text, so far as relates to the extant letters, we may proceed in the investigation of the lines and verses. The first two lines seem to have contained the names of the deceased with the date of his burial (in March or February) as is usual in ancient Christian epitaphs. The verses, most probably, commenced in the 3rd line, and, as the stone has been nearly bisected, we may assume that the lost portion of each line was equal to that which remains, generally, if not always, containing four syllables. These twelve lines, then, may be represented somewhat thus :

- (3) [— — — S] EMPERGEL
- (4) [— — —] PERVENIE
- (5) [— — — CO] NRVERINT
- (6) [— — —] PIIS ? VS
- (7) [— — —] EFFICENE
- (8) [— — — ?] VEPPEACE
- (9) [— — —] TIBIPRO
- (10) [— — —] NECEPRO
- (11) [— — — F] LAMINIVSV
- (12) [— — — ?] EPROFVNE
- (13) [RE — — — L] VCEMVOLV
- (14) [IT — — — RED] DEREVITAE.

The Hexameters may accordingly be—

— u u — semper gelid — u u perveniō —
 — — conruerint u u — u piis ? us u — —
 — — effice ne u u — u p pace u — —
 — tibi pro — — — — nece pro u u — —
Flaminius v — — u u te pro funere — —
 — lucem voluit — — — reddere vi'æ.

Of the six verses the last is marked by a peculiarity that requires notice. In order that we may have the six feet, it is necessary either that the penultimate line should have had six syllables before *lucem* (*scil.* RE — — — —) and the last line three or four before *dere* (*scil.* IT u u RED), or the penultimate—four (*scil.* RE — — —) and the last—five or six (*scil.* IT — — u u RED). But there does not seem to have been room in the lost portion of either line for at most more than four syllables. How then can the requirements of the verse be satisfied? A contracted dissyllabic word will remove the difficulty, such as XPI, XS, or the monogram, usual abbreviations of *Christus*. The 5th and 6th verses may then be represented somewhat thus:

*Flaminius vivit per te: pro funere *duro*
Huic lucem voluit XS sic reddere vitæ.

Now these conjectures, in themselves reasonable, are supported by the authority of similar verses, *e. gr.*

Amicit his Corolus dicitis pulchris, vivimus heros,
Quem placidam voluit vobis tibi reddere Christus
Pro meritis famulum magnis et honoribus auxi.

These Hexameters form part of an inscription on Charlemagne, at Aix-la-Chapelle, and are by some ascribed to Alcuin.

Again, the following Elegiac distich closes the epitaph of the celebrated Goglenius at Louvain:

Præmia sed voluit Christus tibi digna labore
Et festinatas reddere delicias.

In Prudentius, *Peristephan.* xiv. vv. 56-58, we have somewhat similar phraseology but different sense—

Sunt qui rogatam retulerint preces
Fudisse Christo, redderet ut reo
Lucem jacenti.

Lucretius uses the expression—*reddita vitæ mors*—for the exchange of life for death.

* This has been preferred to other appropriate dissyllabic adjectives merely because it has fewer letters.

As to *lucem vitæ*, the phrase is not common in Classical authors; it is used by Cicero once or twice, but not with a similar signification. We may compare, however, the same words in a Latin translation of St. John's Gospel, chap. viii. v. 12; and the use of *lux* in Christian inscriptions is common. Thus in Mai, *Collect. Vatic.* i., 450, *Æterna tibi lux*; in De Rossi, *Inscript. Christianæ*, n. 127, *qui lucem t [enebris mutavit]*, and n. 412,

In Christum credens premia lucis abet (sic);

and in Bosio, p. 49, Bottari, i., p. 53.

Luce nova frueris, lux tibi Christus adest.

In the 5th verse, the reading *Flaminius* seems to be almost certain, but the meaning is not clear. Is it the ordinary Latin *nomen*? Or can it be an adjective derived from *Flamen*, and used in the sense "Episcopal?"

See *Flamines*, *Flaminium*, and *Flamineus*, in Du Cange's *Gloss. Med. et Infim. Latinitatis*, and compare Mandevil's "the Archiflamyn, or the Flamyn, or our Echebishopp or Bishopp," Geoffrey of Monmouth's statement, B. iv., chap. 19, and the criticisms of Fuller, "Church History of Britain," i., p. 23; Bingham, "Christian Antiquities," vol. iii., p. 178, ed. Straker; and Stillingfleet, *Origines Britannicæ*, p. 82, ed. Straker.

Another question also presents itself as to construction. Is *Flaminius* in the nominative, with some substantive (*vir*?) forming the subject to a verb or used for the vocative? To me it seems more probable that *Flaminius*—in the nominative as subject to a verb beginning with *v*, such as *vivit*—was the name of the deceased, and this is countenanced by INII, the first letters in the first line of the wood-cut. In this verse *e* is almost certain, but *t* (*te*) is conjectural. It is possible that *e* and *t* were tied (as is not unusual), the character read as *e* thus being *et*. We may then suggest *vivens vivet*, or *vivit-vivet*, as in Velleius Paterculus relative to Antony and Cicero—*Rapuisti tu M. Ciceroni lucem sollicitam*, &c. *Vivit vivet que per omnem seculorum memoriam*. The meaning of *pro* seems to be "in return for." If it be taken in the sense "instead of," the inscription may be regarded as a dedication for some remarkable cure. But, so far as I recollect, there is nothing similar to the phraseology used here in any such epigraphic record, and the meaning of *pro* with *reddo* may be assumed to be "in return for." *Funere* appears to be used in the sense "death," as is not uncommon.

In the 4th verse, *tibi* may refer either to the person who committed the deed (as in the quotation from Virgil), or to the deceased. The

reading *nece* confirms, of course, the hypothesis of death by violence, but it cannot be received except on the supposition that E was tied to the N and that the N was reversed.

In the 3rd verse, Mr. Mossman's reading suggests *avet* or *avit* for the unintelligible *vep*. *Pace*, also, in this verse is doubtful.

In the 2nd verse, *conruerint* may be regarded as almost certain, but in the wood-cut there seem to be the remains of an E tied to the N. *Piis* is not improbable, but there is not a trace of the letter that was between the final S in *PIIS* and V in *VS*; nor of that which followed *VS*. In the 1st verse, *semper* seems to be certain, and there is but little doubt that it was followed by some case of *gelidus*, possibly *gelida* followed by *nive*. *Pervenie*, a portion of some person of *perveniam*, may be justified by the reading in the woodcut.

As I have now completed the examination of the remains of the text and the formation of the verses, it remains to consider the question as to the age of the inscription. On this subject, however, I can offer no probable conjecture. I am afraid (as I have stated elsewhere, citing as my authorities Maffei and Morcelli) of undertaking to determine the century in which letters were cut, from their form; my impression, however, is that this inscription is not later than the Roman occupation of the island. If *PICTITINIE* be really on the stone, and we resolve this group of letters into *PICTI*=Picts and *TINIE*=*TINIAE*=*TINAE*=Tyne, it may be inferred that the deceased lost his life in an insurrection of the Picts, and the date may, probably, be between A.D. 342 and 446. The third century is suggested by the composite character standing for *TINI*, but this, however, seems scarcely consistent with the use of a * heathen altar (if it were such, as it is stated to have been) for a Christian epitaph, and is otherwise liable to objection.

The prosecution of this interesting enquiry must be left to those who have better opportunities than I have of consulting large libraries, and who, perhaps, may learn, on the spot where the stone was found, some local tradition. All that I have attempted in this article is to state and explain the grounds of the opinion that I have formed that the inscription is more probably sepulchral than votive, and Christian than Pagan.

* A peculiar epitaph (if genuine, possibly Christian, even though beginning with D·M·) found, I believe, at Chester-le-Street, Durham, was cut on an altar. A copy of it will be found in Part III. of the *Lapidarium Septentrionale*.

† No unquestionably Christian *titulus* of the Roman period has hitherto been found in Britain.

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